

## CLAIMS

I claim:

1. A remote learning method for use with a public computer network coupling at least one client computer to a server computer, the method comprising:

receiving over the computer network from a client computer a user selection for a remote educational course;

providing course material, including textual information for the selected course;

providing one or more executable applications to the client computer relevant to the selected course;

providing a virtual picture frame wherein the frame includes one or more links to the executable applications on the client computer;

at the client computer, presenting the virtual picture frame surrounding a display of at least a portion of the textual information for the selected course in a central portion wherein the text requires the user to access one or more of the executable applications;

at the client computer, receiving a user request through a link in the virtual picture frame to access an executable application; and

at the client computer, executing the requested executable application.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising receiving the client selection for a remote educational course in compensation and benefits.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein providing course material further comprises providing graphs, spreadsheets, examples, and simulations.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein providing the virtual picture frame comprises downloading an applet, and wherein downloading the applet further comprises downloading one or more executable applications.

5. The method of claim 4 wherein providing the virtual picture frame further comprises providing a link for accessing one or more resource URLs.

6. The method of claim 4 wherein downloading one or more executable applications further comprises:

providing an active analysis application; and

providing a workshop application, including sample data for solving problems relevant to the selected course.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein presenting the virtual picture frame further comprises:

displaying a right-hand side of the frame when a cursor is moved over a right edge of the central window portion; and

displaying a left-hand side of the frame when a cursor is moved over a left edge of the central window portion.

8. The method of claim 1 wherein presenting the virtual picture frame further comprises displaying a bottom edge of the frame including an active analysis button, wherein the active analysis button is associated with the link to the executable application.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein presenting the virtual picture frame further comprises displaying a bottom edge of the frame including an analysis tutorial button.

10. The method of claim 1 wherein presenting the virtual picture frame further comprises displaying a bottom edge of the frame including a workshop button wherein the workshop button is associated with the link to the executable application, and

wherein the executable application provides at least one case study with sample data on a sample company for solving complex compensation and benefits administration problems related to the subject of the selected course.

11. The method of claim 1 wherein presenting the virtual picture frame further comprises displaying a bottom edge of the frame including a Text button that is associated with a link to a portion of a textbook relevant to the selected course.

12. The method of claim 1 wherein presenting the virtual picture frame further comprises displaying a bottom edge of the frame including an online survey button that is associated with a link to an online survey.

13. The method of claim 1 wherein presenting the virtual picture frame further comprises displaying a bottom edge of the frame including a reference URL button that is associated with a link to at least one reference work relevant to the selected course.

14. The method of claim 1 wherein presenting the virtual picture frame further comprises displaying a bottom edge of the frame including a button associated with a home page for an organization providing the selected course.

15. A remote learning system for use with a computerized network, comprising:

one or more client computers coupled to the computerized network, wherein each client computer provides a client selection for a remote educational course;

a server computer system coupled to the computerized network, wherein the server computer system includes:

at least one server computer for receiving the selection for the remote educational course, retrieving one or more executable applications relevant to the selected course and providing the executable applications to each client computer;

a data storage device coupled to the server computer having a database from which the server computer retrieves data relevant to the selected course; and

wherein the server computer is configured to provide a virtual picture frame wherein the frame surrounds the data relevant to the selected course, and includes one or more buttons with associated links to the executable applications that are executed on the client computer, wherein at least one of the executable applications automatically provides customized executable problems associated with the selected course in response to user selection of one of the buttons.

16. A computer-readable medium storing or transmitting instructions which, when implemented by a computer perform a method for learning course material, comprising:

receiving from a computer a user selection for an educational course;

providing course material, including text;

providing one or more executable applications to the computer relevant to the selected course; and

providing a virtual picture frame wherein the frame surrounds the course material and includes one or more links to the executable applications on the client computer associated with the selected course.

17. The computer-readable medium of claim 16 wherein providing the virtual picture frame comprises downloading an applet, wherein downloading the applet further comprises downloading one or more executable applications.

18. The computer-readable medium of claim 16 wherein providing the virtual picture frame further includes providing links for accessing one or more resource URLs.

19. A method for use with a public computer network coupling at least one client computer to a server computer, the method comprising:

at the server computer, receiving over the computer network from a client computer a client selection for an educational course;

in response to receiving the client selection for an educational course, providing a virtual picture frame having one or more buttons;

at the server computer, providing course material, including text associated with the selected educational course; and

at the server computer, providing one or more executable applications to the client computer relevant to the selected course, wherein at least one executable application is associated with at least one of the buttons and is associated with the selected educational course.

20. The method of claim 19 wherein providing a virtual picture frame includes downloading an applet, wherein downloading the applet further comprises downloading one or more executable applications.

21. The method of claim 19 wherein downloading one or more executable applications further comprises:

providing an active analysis application; and

providing a workshop application, including sample data for solving problems relevant to the selected course.

22. A method for use with a public computer network coupling at least one client computer to a server computer, the method comprising:

at the client computer, providing a client selection for a remote educational course;

receiving course material, including text;

receiving a virtual picture frame;

receiving one or more executable applications;

presenting the virtual picture frame surrounding the text of the selected course, wherein the virtual picture frame includes buttons or links to accessing each of the executable applications and further, wherein the text requires the user to access one or more of the executable applications;

receiving a request from the user through a button or link in the virtual picture frame to access an executable application; and  
executing the requested executable application.

23. The method of claim 22, wherein receiving the virtual picture frame includes downloading an applet, wherein downloading the applet includes downloading one or more executable applications.

24. The method of claim 22 wherein receiving course material includes receiving graphs, spreadsheets, examples, or simulations.

25. A computer-readable medium containing a data structure having information for displaying information regarding an education course provided by a remote computer under a client-server system, wherein the client-server system includes a network coupling at least one client computer with a server computer, the information comprising:

a first portion for displaying a virtual picture frame;

a second portion for displaying text of a remote educational course selected by a user, wherein the first portion includes a plurality of buttons, wherein at least one button is associated with executable code configured to present in the second portion problems to be solved by a user under the remote educational course selected by the user, and wherein a second button is associated with reference material relevant to the remote educational course selected by the user, wherein a portion of the reference material relevant to the remote educational course selected by the user is displayable within the second portion.